



A succinct statement of fact! This banner was created by the SAP artists group before the first grand prix in 1996 as a rooftop banner aimed at circling helicopters. Appropriately the banner includes references to Edvard Munch's painting, 'The Scream'. Next to it in the photo are banners used at SAP's 'Vigil' in the park which operated for 12 years, 1994-2006.

Formula 1 in today's world As a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Formula 1 has cancelled the Russian grand prix, scheduled to be held on September 26 in the Black Sea city of Sochi. This is an entirely justifiable and commendable action. Less commendable is Formula 1's claim that it is following a sustainability strategy and is aiming to be a net zero emissions sport by 2030, '*with circuits that are better for fans well-being and for nature*'. If Formula 1 means what it says, it would not agree to staging the Australian grand prix in a temporary circuit in a public park.

Formula 1 car racing is not a sport in the normal sense: essentially it is an entertainment and a marketing platform for the automotive and hospitality industries. As SAP has been saying for 26 years, the event belongs in properly located permanent circuits, not in city streets or public parkland.

Melbourne's 2022 F1 grand prix The Australian Grand Prix Corporation (AGPC) is trumpeting its ticket sales for the event on April 7-10, claiming sell-out crowds of 130,000 on race day, and over 100,000 on Saturday. Considering its past history of including the so-called 'credentials' (event staff, competitors etc) and free tickets in its attendance estimates, we could assume the numbers of actual spectators will be far less. The AGPC has not yet published a ticket sales revenue figure. This figure will eventually tell the true story.

The precincts A new feature of the event will be the creation of 'precincts' within the circuit site which will promote five regions in Victoria: Melbourne, Phillip Island, The Grampians, Yarra Valley and the Great Ocean Road. The level of promotion to be provided by these precincts is indicated by the following extracts from the AGPC's website:

Melbourne *Melbourne comes to life during the Formula 1 Heineken Grand Prix with the off track action in our Melbourne Precinct specifically designed to reflect the culture and creativity of the city.*

Phillip Island *Combining great food, fast cars, and a plethora of activities to keep the kids (big and small) entertained, the Phillip Island Precinct is not your average day out with family.*

Grampians *The Grampians Precinct captures the essence of this iconic region by pairing an action-packed family friendly offering with a high octane F1 experience.*

Yarra Valley *Inspired by one of Australia's most revered wine growing regions, our Yarra Valley Precinct is tailor made for anyone looking to add a touch of class to their F1 experience.*

Great Ocean Road *Built to reflect one of the world's most scenic drives, our Great Ocean Road Precinct puts you at the heart of the action with facilities that line the circuit's penultimate straight.*

Cost of the precincts? The AGPC's 2021 Annual Report shows (on page 43) that the AGPC received 'government contributions' of \$27.8m to cover the costs of the cancelled 2021 F1 grand prix and \$62.1m for the cancelled 2020 event. However, on page 73 of the report, under the heading 'Significant transactions with government-related entities', there is this statement: *'The Corporation received funding of \$107.3 million (2020: \$83.1 million) from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.'*

All this apparently means that the AGPC has recently received \$280.3m in state government funding, \$190.4m of which came from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions. The obvious implication is that the latter sum is to cover the cost of the AGPC's promotion of the five 'precincts', ie, nearly \$40m for each precinct...enough for a tent or two.



F1 action at the 2019 grand prix (drive .com.au, 27/2/22). Don't do that to our roads!

Resurfacing of park roads During 2021 a series of changes were made to the park roads used for the grand prix circuit, involving widening of pit straight and opening up some corners to allow for speeds up to 330kph. This reconstruction was followed by resurfacing with a special asphalt, apparently to increase tyre grip and consequent tyre wear. SAP submitted an FOI request to the AGPC for the cost of this work and after an initial refusal and an appeal to the Office of the of the Victorian Information Commissioner, we were supplied with an itemised list showing the total cost to be \$18.5m, including \$6m (cost apparently still being negotiated) for resurfacing.

Erection of race infrastructure



Construction of the circuit for the April 7-10 event started in January and is well advanced. The photo (taken 28/2/22) shows the 'Chicane' corporate pavilion facing Turn 1 and a row of huge grandstands .



Photo from a bystanders video (speedcafe.com 2/1/22)

Stolen car crashes in flames on Lakeside Drive At about 9am on Sunday morning, 2nd January, the driver of a stolen car lost control when travelling north on the recently reconstructed Lakeside Drive and the car crashed through bollards, hit a tree and burst into flames. The three occupants of the car were injured but survived after being helped out of the car by park visitors. Apparently the accident happened on the long curve which now replaces the former Turns 9 and 10 of the circuit, and where speeds of up to 330 kph are now expected to be achieved during the grand prix. **Track day?** Parks Victoria has now imposed a speed limit of 40 kph on Lakeside Drive for normal public use, but the road could present an irresistible temptation to certain drivers. There have been reports that the Wednesday of the grand prix week will be 'Track Day' when members of the public could pay to drive their own cars flat out around the circuit. SAP has made a formal enquiry to the AGPC as to whether this is actually going to happen, but a response has yet to be received.

The grand prix and covid-19 The AGPC's C EO, Andrew Westacott, is apparently confident that the grand prix will be conducted safely and that there will not be a repeat of the Novak Djokovic saga. All drivers and team members will have to be fully vaccinated, test negative and will be confined to a race operating 'bubble'.



This sky sign was 'written' above Sydney on March 11, 2020 calling for the Melbourne 2020 grand prix to be scrapped because of concerns about covid-19. The sign was apparently widely shared online but it is not known who was responsible. (It's an idea worth investigating for other reasons!)

Reduced significance of the grand prix. This year there were to be 23 grand prix races around the world. The Russian event has now been dropped but a replacement could be found. In 2019 there were 21 races and 20 in 2017. Every additional race reduces the value of the Melbourne race as a 'major event'. There are four grand slam tennis tournaments and Melbourne stages one of them. That event really puts the city 'on the world stage'. We don't need the grand prix's much smaller contribution.

The Commonwealth Games: goldmine or a dud of an event ? Premier Daniel Andrews has announced that Victoria will put in a bid to host the 2026 Commonwealth Games. The state hosted the event in 2006. As reported by *news.com* on February 16, the Premier said that the event would “reconfirm in everyone’s mind that we are the major events capital, the sporting capital and that regional Victoria is the most beautiful part of our nation” and added “Work has started on figuring out the cost and benefits of the plan after a two-month exclusivity agreement was signed on Tuesday night (Feb. 15)”.

Major Events Minister Martin Pakula said the event “would be a chance for Victoria to display itself to an international audience. Bringing the 2026 Commonwealth Games to Victoria will showcase our state globally, deliver major economic benefits and support jobs across our great state.”

The Commonwealth Games Federation has been in discussions with multiple countries for hosting the 2026 Games, and apparently there are no other bidders. Australia has staged the Commonwealth Games on five occasions, most recently on the Gold Coast in 2018.

SAP notes that working out the costs and benefits of the Games has now started after signing up to make a bid. This sounds a bit like the way Jeff Kennett signed up for the grand prix and we suspect the promised benefits will just comprise the economic impact of the Games eg, the sales boost to the travel and hospitality interests..

Jeff Kennett appears to have learnt something over the years. He was quoted in the *HeraldSun* on Feb, 17 as saying that the Games were now irrelevant and “not an investment that made any sense whatever”. The head of Small Business Australia, Bill Lang, said that without a rigorous cost-benefit analysis showing clear dividends, the bid should be scrapped. The Gold Coast Mayor, Tom Tate, said that lessons from the city’s 2018 Games should be heeded, and recommended that a volunteer base should be established immediately.

However, our Premier and the major events minister are pressing on regardless. Mr Andrews has been quoted as saying that a cost-benefit analysis is “on the way”, but “the billion or two needed to host the event was an investment, not a cost”.

‘Acoustic aggression’ (a letter to *The Age*, not published)

The *Age* article, ‘Noisy traffic on notice in sensor trials’ (Feb, 23) referred to the drastic reduction in traffic accidents in France and the saving of thousands of lives following the introduction of speed cameras. This article also commented at length on the ‘acoustic aggression’ generated by motor vehicles and which has been estimated to reduce the life expectancy of Parisians by nine months.

These comments are relevant to the F1 grand prix event which the state government has been promoting over the past quarter century, and which has cost well over a billion dollars in public funds. This event is conducted on normally quiet public roads through parkland which has been transformed into a car racing circuit where speeds of over 300kph are achieved, the drivers are glorified and smashes provide the thrills the spectators expect. Young children and school students are given free tickets to encourage them to attend and become F1 race fans. Then there is the ‘acoustic aggression’ against residents living nearby created by the racing cars which have exhaust systems designed to enhance an already harmful noise level. Not all residents, particularly the elderly, are able to escape this affront. It’s all the antithesis of the activities of a civilised society.



Promoting the grand prix to kids

The Grand Prix Corporation offers a variety of Formula 1-badged merchandise including clothing (caps, shirts etc) for motor racing fans and their children. For \$30 you can now buy an F1 romper suit (at left) suitable for an infant who can barely walk. Formula 1 has always been very keen on recruiting school kids as fans but this this indicates an expansion into a new market. We suggest a special pocket for ear plugs

SAP contacts

Media enquiries: Peter Logan, mob. 0412 697 074; email peterandjoanlogan@hotmail.com

Membership/accounts: Greg Byrne, tel. 9645 1301; email greg-byrne@bigpond.com

SAP Newsletter/campaign: Peter Goad 9699 7932; email pwgoad@outlook.com

Post: PO Box 1300, South Melbourne BC 3205

